

Florin Japanese American Citizen League
Oral History Project

Oral History Interview
with
Robert and Teresa Fletcher

April, 1995
Florin, California

By Elizabeth Pinkerton

Florin Japanese American Citizens League
Oral History Project
California State University, Sacramento
Sacramento, California



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

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PREFACE

In the summer of 1987, a small group of people from the Florin JACL met at Mary and Al Tsukamoto's home to plan a new project for the organization. Because of the unique history of Florin, we felt that there were special stories that needed to be preserved. The town of Florin, California was once a thriving farming community with a large Japanese American population. The World War II internment of persons of Japanese ancestry living on the west coast, devastated the town and it never recovered. Today there is no town of Florin; it has been merged into the larger county of Sacramento. Many Japanese Americans who reside throughout the United States, however, have their origins from Florin, or have relatives and friends who once had ties to this community. The town may no longer exist, but the spirit of the community continues to survive in people's hearts and memories.

Several hours have been devoted to interviewing former Florin residents. The focus of the interviews was on the forced internment and life in the relocation camps, but our questions touched on other issues. We asked about their immigration to the United States from Japan, pre-war experiences, resettlement after the war and personal philosophies. We also wanted to record the stories of the people left behind. They were friends and neighbors who watched in anguish as the trains transported the community away.

We have conducted these interviews with feelings of urgency. If we are to come away with lessons from this historic tragedy, we must listen to and become acquainted with the people who were there. Many of these historians are in their 70's, 80's and 90's. We are grateful that they were willing to share their experiences and to answer our questions with openness and thoughtfulness.

We owe special thanks to James F. Carlson, former Assistant Dean of American River College and to Jackie Reinier, former Director of the Oral History Program at California State University in Sacramento. Without their enthusiasm, encouragement and expertise, we never could have produced this collection of oral histories. We also wish to acknowledge the project members, volunteers, the Florin JACL which contributed financial support, Sumitomo Bank for their corporate donation, and the Taisho Young Mens Association which contributed some of their assets as they dissolved their corporation on December 31, 1991.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTERVIEW HISTORY.	i
BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY.	ii
SESSION 1	
[Tape 1, Side A]	1
Introductions--Family Background--Educational Background--Early Employment History--Florin Agriculture--Childhood in Florin--Initial Reaction to Internment--Marriage--Establishment of Farm.	
[Tape 1, Side B]	31
Donation to Park--Development in Florin--Florin History--Members of Early Florin Community--Reaction to Japanese during War--Florin Agriculture--Working as Children--Relations with Japanese-Americans	

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Interviewer:

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Circumstances of Interview:

The taped recorded interview was conducted by Elizabeth Pinkerton at the home of Robert and Teresa Fletcher in Florin, California. The purpose of the interview was to gather information related to the town of Florin prior to the relocation of Japanese Americans who lived there in 1942, the war years, and the changes in Florin after the war, when families began to return to the area. Mr. Fletcher had made arrangements with Mary and Alfred Tsukamotos, to take care of their strawberry and grape farm while they were gone to internment camp. Through the Tsukamotos, arrangements were made for Mr. Fletcher to also take care of two neighboring farms, those of the Nishi family and the Ouchida family. Mr. Fletcher cared for these ninety acres of grapes and strawberries from 1942 until 1945.

The manuscript was edited by Elizabeth Pinkerton with the assistance of Robert and Teresa Fletcher. Dan Inouye, Florin Japanese American Citizens League member, reproduced the primary pictures provided from Robert and Teresa Fletcher's family album.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Robert Fletcher, born 1911, was the only child of Olive and Robert Fletcher, Sr., residents of Contra Costa County. His grandparents had come across the plains in wagon trains to California from Pennsylvania and New York. Bob graduated from Brentwood High School and attended the University of California, Davis. There were only 250 students at the university when he enrolled there in 1929. He majored in horticulture and became a fruit and vegetable inspector, traveling across the state working for the Bureau of Shipping Point Inspection. This is what brought him to the Florin area, where he became acquainted with the Tsukamotos and agreed to take care of their farm while they were gone.

Teresa Cassieri Fletcher was born in 1924. Her parents were part of a small group of Italian families that lived in Florin. The Casseiris and Frasinettis were cousins, and were affiliated with the winemaking industry. Teresa spoke Italian at home and learned English when she went to school. She attended the Florin West School during the time that the elementary schools in Florin were segregated. She graduated from Elk Grove High School in 1943. Half of her classmates were shipped to internment camps just before the end of her junior years, in May of 1942. Teresa worked in the fields, as all children did, along with the members of their families. Teresa and her mother tied vines, and were part of the crew that was hired by Bob Fletcher to work in the grapes. That is how Teresa and Bob met, and they were married in the spring of 1945. They lived in the Tsukamoto house until Mary and Al returned to Florin from Kalamazoo later that year.

The Fletchers purchased a forty-acre farm on Florin Road, between French Road and Elk Grove-Florin. They raised cattle and settled into the Florin community where they are well known today. Bob was Director of the Florin County Water District. He also was a member of the Elk Grove School Naming Committee, the Sacramento County Farm Supply Company, and the Florin and East Contra Costa Historical Societies. Teresa was Secretary and President of the Florin Firemen's Ladies Auxiliary and a member of the Florin Historical Society. Part of their farm was developed into Sunrise Florin homes and a large park. They still have three acres where they live

[Session 1, April 1995]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

PINKERTON: I know you haven't lived in Florin your entire life, Bob. Where were you born?

ROBERT F: I was born in San Francisco. However, we lived in Brentwood, Contra Costa County.

PINKERTON: You just happened to go to San Francisco to be born?

ROBERT F: Well there were no hospitals much in those days. My mother went down to her sister's and that's where they had me.

PINKERTON: What was the date?

ROBERT F: July 26, 1911.

PINKERTON: How about you, Teresa?

TERESA F: I was born here in Florin in 1924, March 7th.

PINKERTON: Where did your family live?

TERESA F: They lived here in the Florin area, moved several times.

PINKERTON: Could you tell us what your family name was?

TERESA F: Michael and Lucia Cassieri.

PINKERTON: Could you spell Cassieri?

TERESA F: C-A-S-S-I-E-R-I.

PINKERTON: How about your parents, Bob? Their names?

ROBERT F: Robert and Olive, Robert Senior. I'm Robert Junior.

PINKERTON: Had they lived in Contra Costa County all the time?

ROBERT F: My mother did. My father did most of his life.

PINKERTON: How about your grandparents? Where did they come from?

ROBERT F: My grandfather came across the Plains. My grandmother from somewhere around Pennsylvania area. My grandfather from New York state. They both came across in wagon trains.

PINKERTON: 1860s or 1850s?

ROBERT F: 1850s.

PINKERTON: Very early then. How about you, Teresa?

TERESA F: My grandparents came from Italy. Just my grandmother came from Italy. I never did know my grandfather.

PINKERTON: Did they come here to the Florin area?

TERESA F: Yes.

ROBERT F: From New York first?

TERESA F: Well, they came to New York first, and then from there, to the Florin area.

PINKERTON: About when?

TERESA F: That's a good question.

ROBERT F: In the early twenties, because . . .

TERESA F: . . . my dad came in 1912.

PINKERTON: Okay, that's close enough. Came here to Florin?

TERESA F: Yes.

PINKERTON: Was he an agriculturist or some other occupation?

TERESA F: No, they just came. They lived with the Frasinettis. My grandmother lived with the Frasinettis, who was Rose Frasinetti's mother.

PINKERTON: So basically that's a common thing, people came where they knew somebody.

TERESA F: Yes.

PINKERTON: Did they purchase some property then, and that's what kept them here?

TERESA F: No, not that I know of.

PINKERTON: What kind of work did they do?

TERESA F: My grandmother, I don't think she did anything.

PINKERTON: How about your grandfather?

TERESA F: I don't know much about my grandfather.

PINKERTON: How about your parents?

TERESA F: My father was born in New York City, then he went back to Italy. Then he came back to the United States.

PINKERTON: And came here?

TERESA F: Yes, and he worked for the Frasinettis.

PINKERTON: And what kind of work did they do there at that time, raising grapes?

TERESA F: Well, raising grapes, but he was a wine maker. But first I think he worked at the candy factory in Sacramento.

PINKERTON: So your father was a wine maker.

TERESA F: Yes, for the Frasinettis.

PINKERTON: Okay, well that's interesting. How about your father, [Robert]?

ROBERT F: Always a farmer.

PINKERTON: What kind of farming?

ROBERT F: Well in Contra Costa County, it was mostly grain farming in those days.

PINKERTON: Then what happened to you? You went to school. . . .

ROBERT F: I graduated from the Brentwood High School and then I went to UC Davis [University of California, Davis] until I finished there.

PINKERTON: Majoring in what?

ROBERT F: Agriculture.

PINKERTON: So you have an agricultural degree from UC Davis?

ROBERT F: It's a non-degree certificate.

PINKERTON: I imagine that's when the university was a lot smaller than it is now.

ROBERT F: When I first started there were only 250 students.

PINKERTON: Oh my goodness, so it really was in its beginning days.

ROBERT F: In the three years I was there it got up to 500 something.

PINKERTON: Did you select a particular area in agriculture or were you a generalist?

ROBERT F: I selected horticulture.

PINKERTON: Okay.

ROBERT F: And I ended up with cattle later on, since I didn't take any husbandry courses.

PINKERTON: Teresa, you went to Elk Grove High School?

TERESA F: Yes I did.

PINKERTON: Graduated in?

TERESA F: 1943.

PINKERTON: 1943, so you're an Elk Grove girl all the way.

TERESA F: Yes. [Laughter]

PINKERTON: So you basically lived in Florin your whole life.

TERESA F: Yes. [I] was born across the street, not where the Gulf Green Mobile Estates is, but in back.

PINKERTON: Okay. You went to Florin Elementary School, then?

TERESA F: Yes. They called it the Florin West Grammar School.

PINKERTON: The brick building?

TERESA F: Yes, I graduated from there.

PINKERTON: So what brought you to Florin, Bob? If you were at UC Davis, you were getting closer from Contra Costa County.

ROBERT F: The first time I ever came to Florin was when I was on a field trip from UC Davis in 1931.

PINKERTON: What kind of a field trip? What did you come here to see?

ROBERT F: To see the grape harvest and the picking of the grapes.

PINKERTON: What was your impression of it?

ROBERT F: Frankly, I don't remember. It was just another packing shed. I had worked in packing sheds in my home town. It was interesting but nothing unusual. It was just a field trip.

PINKERTON: When might this have been?

ROBERT F: 1931 probably.

PINKERTON: Little did you know you were going to end up spending a significant part of your life here.

When you finished your schooling, then what?

ROBERT F: When I was just about ready to leave school, a person from Red Bluff contacted me to come be a foreman at his peach ranch in Red Bluff. I spent about two and half years up there.

PINKERTON: So you became a peach expert.

ROBERT F: Well, it was running a peach ranch, that's all.

PINKERTON: And then?

ROBERT F: Then I started fruit and vegetable inspection for the State of California and later on for Sacramento County.

PINKERTON: Which department was it? From the state agriculture department?

ROBERT F: At the state, it was the Bureau of Shipping Point Inspection. That's also federal connected and state. Actually, it's a federal and state, the Bureau of Shipping Point Inspection.

PINKERTON: So how did you get this job? You just went and applied for an opening or someone told you about it?

ROBERT F: Well, more or less we had studied that at Davis and I don't remember. Some way I got it. I suppose I applied. I don't remember.

PINKERTON: You worked out of there then, out of Sacramento?

ROBERT F: No. I worked all over the state[s] of California and Arizona, anywhere there was vegetables and fruit.

PINKERTON: So this would be in the late 1930s or middle 1930s?

ROBERT F: Late 1930s. Well, wait a minute, from 1936. . . . Yeah, starting around 1936.

PINKERTON: So you traveled around and made these inspections? Were they unplanned ones, like people didn't know you were coming?

ROBERT F: No, in the Shipping Point Inspection we would inspect the fruit and write a certificate on it. [Telephone rang] Sometimes it was required in order for people to be able to ship their fruit. [They] would have to have a certificate saying it met certain grades. It was all over. I went as far as Phoenix for lettuce, up to Ukiah for grapes, all over the state.

PINKERTON: So were you basically on the road?

ROBERT F: We stayed during, for instance, during the plum season, we stayed until the end of the season. Then we would move into something else, peaches, tomatoes, or lettuce.

PINKERTON: So there was a team of you?

ROBERT F: Well, there was probably forty guys, all together. Some of the time, at one place, there would be seven or eight inspectors. Sometimes there would only be one of us.

PINKERTON: What kind of things were you looking at?

ROBERT F: Basically, we were certifying it was a certain grade.

PINKERTON: By grade, that means the quality?

ROBERT F: Yes, are you familiar with when you buy potatoes it's [United States] US #1? Well, we would certify that it was US #1. Then our people back East could pick up that certificate and buy whatever was in the car on that certificate, providing we didn't make a mistake or something.

PINKERTON: So you did this inspecting when they were ready to ship it? What would happen if it didn't meet the grade?

ROBERT F: Well, we did what we called a reversal. In other words, they could reinspect back there if they found out it wasn't exactly what we said it was. It could happen. They could make a mistake, but they could also slip some stuff in that we didn't see, because we weren't there all the time.

PINKERTON: That's what kind of put you into a traveling mode across the state. So now what brought you to Florin?

ROBERT F: Well, I had inspected grapes out here for several years and I also inspected strawberries for the county, which is a different situation. With the county you could actually turn them down.

PINKERTON: So the county had their own inspectors, not you?

ROBERT F: Well, the Agriculture Commission, they were working for a different department all together. I kept that up until 1942, when they took the Japanese out of here and then I took over ninety acres of grapes, three families of grapes.

PINKERTON: So you weren't living here at the time?

ROBERT F: No, I did have a semi-permanent home in Sacramento. We would be maybe a month in a place, maybe two weeks, maybe six weeks. We just moved around the state.

PINKERTON: So how did you happen to decide that you wanted to stay here and do this?

ROBERT F: I don't know. It was just there and it was just something that needed to be done.

PINKERTON: So what did you take over then? Whose ninety acres were these?

ROBERT F: Tsukamoto's, Okamoto's, and Nishi's.

PINKERTON: Were they adjacent to one another?

ROBERT F: Yes, they were all together, right next to where Mary [Tsukamoto] lived. They were all together.

PINKERTON: On Florin-Perkins Road? And that was all grapes? Had you had any experience in raising grapes?

ROBERT F: No, just from knowing agriculture.

PINKERTON: Then what, you moved there then?

ROBERT F: Not until later on. I think in a year or two I moved out to Mary's house.

PINKERTON: Oh, you lived right there in the house.

ROBERT F: Later on.

PINKERTON: What kinds of things did you encounter in terms of the agricultural part of this?

ROBERT F: Nothing unusual. Grapes were not much different than anything else.

PINKERTON: So your experience that you already had with general agricultural things, you could put that into place there.

ROBERT F: Right, it's actually no different.

PINKERTON: You basically have things you have to do in the spring. Why don't you just walk me through what that cycle is? This time of the year what would you be doing in the grapes?

ROBERT F: Well, I start out first, from November to February, I'd be pruning.

PINKERTON: So you did the pruning yourself?

ROBERT F: The biggest part of it, I had a few people help me. Then coming up would be cultivation. And then you'd be softening. During the summer you'd be irrigating. About every two weeks you'd irrigate.

PINKERTON: When are you harvesting then?

ROBERT F: In the fall, let's say August through October.

PINKERTON: So your first harvest would have been in the fall of 1942?

ROBERT F: Right.

PINKERTON: Was it a fairly good harvest, and what happened to the grapes?

ROBERT F: Well, we packed quite a few in and took the rest to the winery. Over the years I think we shipped 12,000 crates and about 120 tons to the winery, I think it was.

PINKERTON: 12,000 crates.

ROBERT F: That's the eastern shipment or lugs. You should probably say lugs.

PINKERTON: Now was the grape production stable from what had happened previously or was there a decline?

ROBERT F: Well, being it was just one of me and it was about twelve of the other people that didn't get done all the way it should be, but it was fairly good.

PINKERTON: In terms of this ninety acres, basically this was pretty much taken care of. What was your agreement with these three families?

ROBERT F: On a share basis. After all expenses are out, we split the profit.

PINKERTON: How did you work that out, just on a person to person basis? Did somebody contact you or did you contact them?

ROBERT F: No, we kind of worked it out.

PINKERTON: How did you know these people?

ROBERT F: Well, I had been inspecting here for about five years.

PINKERTON: Oh, because you had been their inspector. Okay. I presume they trusted you and you trusted them.

ROBERT F: I don't think they had much choice, but we did.

PINKERTON: What was your understanding of what was happening during that time? What kind of information were you getting about what was happening to them?

ROBERT F: Oh, we corresponded.

PINKERTON: No, I mean before they left.

ROBERT F: What's that.

PINKERTON: Before the Japanese left.

ROBERT F: Yes, but what about it?

PINKERTON: What was your understanding of what was happening to them?

ROBERT F: Well, they were just being evacuated, right quick-like.

PINKERTON: And you think that was okay? Did you think what was going on?

ROBERT F: I really didn't understand what it was all about.

PINKERTON: But people just accepted it.

ROBERT F: I suppose. I had always been too busy taking care of that place to worry about anything else. I've been interviewed several times and I keep telling them I don't know what went on around the country, because I was too darn busy.

PINKERTON: That's true, people get involved with what they're doing on a daily basis. Now, Teresa, how about you? As you're going through school here, what was life like in Florin for a little girl growing up here?

TERESA F: Well, I enjoyed it. It was nice growing up here in this area. It was quiet and peaceful. It seems like we knew everybody and everybody was our friend. It didn't matter what nationality they were.

PINKERTON: Who's all in your family? You've got your mom and dad. Your dad works at the winery?

TERESA F: Yes, and I have two brothers and three sisters.

PINKERTON: Where do you fit into the family?

TERESA F: I'm the second oldest one.

PINKERTON: I didn't ask you [Robert] about brothers and sisters.

ROBERT F: No.

PINKERTON: You didn't have any brothers or sisters?

ROBERT F: No, no.

TERESA F: I am the second oldest one.

PINKERTON: You're one of the oldest ones, then. What was it like going to school at Florin? You had a little bit of a walk, if you lived across the road here.

TERESA F: No, I didn't live across the road. I lived at McNie and Reese Road [s], at the corner.

PINKERTON: So you were much closer then.

TERESA F: Yes, we walked to school. We cut through fields to get there quicker. We made paths through the fields.

PINKERTON: Who were some of your teachers at that time?

TERESA F: Mrs. Talley and Mrs. Flint, Mrs Jackson . . .

PINKERTON: . . . Isabel Jackson?

TERESA F: Yes, she taught me a lot. When I went to school I couldn't speak English, I was speaking Italian all the time. Then when I got a little bit older I was teaching the first graders, helping the teachers.

PINKERTON: You could have been a teacher, huh. [Laughter]

TERESA F: Well, I don't know. I could have I guess.

PINKERTON: Were there other children who spoke their native languages at home. I mean we've always known that the Japanese families did, but what about others?

TERESA F: We all spoke [English]. In fact we taught my mother English. She spoke English, kind of broken.

PINKERTON: Were there other Italian families here?

TERESA F: My aunt, my mother's sister.

PINKERTON: What was her name?

TERESA F: Teresa.

PINKERTON: Her last name?

TERESA F: Cassieri.

PINKERTON: Oh, she was Cassieri too.

TERESA F: My mother and Teresa were sisters . . .

PINKERTON: . . . and they married two brothers.

TERESA F: Yes, we're first cousins. I got it all.

PINKERTON: Good, you've got it right there. So there's two Cassieri families, then. So were there cousins with the other family?

TERESA F: Let's see how many cousins. Well the Frasinettis, they were cousins.

PINKERTON: So they're all cousins too.

TERESA F: Yes.

PINKERTON: When you went to school then, did you go to school with Japanese children, too?

TERESA F: Not at first, no.

PINKERTON: Because they had the two schools?

TERESA F: Yes, the two schools. When I went to high school, that's when I went to school with the Japanese Americans.

PINKERTON: Did anybody ever give any thought to there being the two schools?

TERESA F: No, we just didn't know much about it. As kids we didn't pay any attention. We never did know why they went to that school.

PINKERTON: Then when you went to high school, everybody went to one high school.

TERESA F: Yes.

PINKERTON: Okay. Actually [that] would have been a sizable population of the Japanese kids there. How did kids get along with each other, when they really didn't know each other?

TERESA F: Oh great. We got along fine. We didn't think anything of them as being different. They were friends just like anybody else.

PINKERTON: And Elk Grove High School, at that time, was a pretty stable institution. It was one of the few big high schools around here, wasn't it?

TERESA F: Yes.

PINKERTON: You graduated in what year?

TERESA F: 1943.

PINKERTON: So you went to school with a lot of people who still live in this area.

TERESA F: Yes, there's a lot them still around.

PINKERTON: Actually, while you were in high school then is when the Japanese kids left?

TERESA F: Yes.

PINKERTON: What was that like?

TERESA F: It was sad, because we hated to see them go.

PINKERTON: Mr. Smedberg was the principal at the time?

TERESA F: Yes, then we had Mr. Beeman after.

PINKERTON: How was it announced to you? I've heard his version of it and I've talked to a couple of other students of the time. What was your understanding of what was happening?

TERESA F: I didn't quite understand what was going on, actually.

PINKERTON: You were what, a junior [or] sophomore?

TERESA F: Let's see 1942, sophomore.

ROBERT F: Well you graduated in 1944?

TERESA F: 1943.

ROBERT F: 1943.

PINKERTON: Yes, so you would have been a junior then?

TERESA F: I don't know, it seemed like it was sad and it was a bad thing to do. We couldn't understand it.

PINKERTON: No one really understood what was going on.

TERESA F: No, no we didn't.

PINKERTON: And it happened in such a short period of time.

TERESA F: Yes, uh-huh.

PINKERTON: What about after they left, there was still a little bit of school left and all of a sudden, what, about half of the kids are gone.

TERESA F: Yes, it just didn't seem right. Then I guess the students, I don't think they thought anything more about it. It just kind of faded away a little bit, I think. It was sad at graduation, because they weren't there to graduate with us.

PINKERTON: Were you aware of any of the bad feelings about getting the Japanese out of here? Did parents or neighbors or anybody talk about things?

TERESA F: I can't remember too much about it, what happened to people. I think there were some probably, you know, that felt like they deserved it. Most of them that I knew didn't talk about it. I know they were writing stuff on the windows in the stores and things like that.

PINKERTON: I remember one person, in fact, from your class who told me that her best friend left and that she wanted to write to her and her mother wouldn't let her. They were afraid that the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] or somebody would be questioning them. Were you aware of any of those kind of thoughts?

TERESA F: No. There was one fellow, he said will you write to me, I can't remember who it was. I said sure, but I never heard from him. He wanted to know what was going on in Florin and I said yes I'll write to you, if I hear from you. But I never did hear from him, I don't know what happened.

PINKERTON: So during those four years, you're still graduating from high school and you're [Robert] over here running a farm. Now as you're running that farm, are there any kinds of community reaction to you doing that?

ROBERT F: My standard answer, I was too busy to even think about it. I don't remember any. Although you read [it] in the paper. I never had any problem.

PINKERTON: Now how did the two of you get together?

TERESA F: That's a good question.

ROBERT F: When the Japanese left, a corporation called Florin Farms took over the ranches that worked. They didn't like mine, they took over ones that had nobody to take care them. So they were running them and for the first few months I was a field hand for Florin Farms, which is like

ROBERT F: Florin Fruit Growers, only it's different. We had to tie the grape vines. They would come out and tie the grapes so the sun would get in. She [Teresa] and her mother were the tie-ers and I went around to pick them up in the morning. She always got in first and sat beside me.

[Laughter]

TERESA F: But my mother was there too. But I don't know if that stopped it. [Laughter]

ROBERT F: Then the next couple of years, she and her mother both worked for me when they were packing grapes.

TERESA F: I was going to school. After school . . .

PINKERTON: . . . this is high school?

TERESA F: High school. I was a senior. He would ask my mother if I could come and help with the grapes. Was that clipping grapes?

ROBERT F: We had a good time. I think you were out of school when you worked in the shed because that was fall.

TERESA F: I remember, I was disgusted because I wanted to go out with the other kids, and I had to work. I went to school all day, I don't think I wanted to go work after school.

PINKERTON: But your mother had a different idea.

TERESA F: Yes.

ROBERT F: Anyway, that's how we met. Then we got married.

PINKERTON: So the grapes are very central to your life.

TERESA F: Yes, I think after the evacuation all the kids around here worked in the fields and tied grape vines. In fact, most of the kids that went to the Florin Elementary worked and some from the high school. We worked in the hops, too.

PINKERTON: The hops were primarily over on the Consumnes River.

TERESA F: Yes, at Sloughhouse and Castleman Ranch and Jack Westlake's. These names just ring a bell-I know exactly where they are. We would go and work, I was so allergic to them, I would break out. But, the money was the idea, to make money to buy school clothes.

PINKERTON: That's basically what the kids did around here.

TERESA F: Some of them, they picked blackberries and strawberries.

PINKERTON: You [Robert] didn't have anything to do with hop inspection, or did you?

ROBERT F: That's one thing that I never had anything to do with, hops, at all, except I saw them growing, that's all. I went to school in Davis with some of the hop growers out here. What was his name? Percy Westerberg.

PINKERTON: Let me come back, now you're [Teresa] graduating from high school and you're [Bob] over here running these three farms, these ninety acres.

ROBERT F: I graduated from Davis and then I worked from there to the shipping.

PINKERTON: Right, I want to establish this time period, [when] the two of you got together. So now all of a sudden the war is over and the Japanese are coming back, what does that do to your situation?

ROBERT F: Well, getting back to that, we were married the spring before they came back, I think.

TERESA F: We were married in June and they came back the same year.

ROBERT F: They came back a little later.

PINKERTON: So this would be 1945.

ROBERT F: Yes.

TERESA F: Yes, we got married in 1945.

ROBERT F: They came back in 1945 also, right after we got married.

TERESA F: It seemed like it was in July, am I right? Or was it later?

ROBERT F: It was shortly after we were married. It wasn't too long.

PINKERTON: Well, the war was over in August and so it was in the fall that they were coming back.

ROBERT F: Probably in August. I know they came back

PINKERTON: So you worked there too?

TERESA F: I worked and I clipped grapes. That was in August, I believe.

ROBERT F: The last year, when they came back you didn't work because you were pregnant, but she worked the year before. [We had] her mother and several ladies working, I think we had about six or seven. They put the grapes in there, we had one lady that packed it. You asked [about] when they [Japanese] came back. . . . When they came back it was time to harvest, so we didn't have to have any outside help. They actually worked for me because it was still, I guess you

ROBERT F: could say contract, but it was still, as Mary said, it was still our crop. They all picked and clipped the grapes for me and I paid them and then we split the profit.

PINKERTON: Now you lived in their house while they were gone and then when they came back, they came to their house.

ROBERT F: Yes, but there was a little small building out there. So the month or so that we stayed there we just moved into that little one-room building.

PINKERTON: And you were there by then, too?

TERESA F: Yes, we were married then.

ROBERT F: We had been married and lived in their house a few months.

PINKERTON: This meant a career change for you.

ROBERT F: When?

PINKERTON: When they came back and they took over their property, then what happened with you?

ROBERT F: Well, we bought this place. Right after the crop was over . . .

PINKERTON: . . . so you've been here this whole time?

ROBERT F: It will be fifty years this fall. We have our golden wedding [anniversary] next June.

TERESA F: November of 1945.

ROBERT F: Yes, it was in the fall.

PINKERTON: How big a piece [of land] was this?

ROBERT F: Forty acres.

PINKERTON: Forty acres? What had been here when you bought it? Was it grapes or strawberries?

ROBERT F: They had been pulled out, so it was just forty acres. We raised some hay first and then we put it all into permanent pasture for cattle.

PINKERTON: So you basically raised cattle, then? Could you do that on forty acres?

ROBERT F: We also had fourteen acres we bought later on. We had a hundred head of cattle here. All beef cattle, no milk.

TERESA F: Then you went back to work for the state.

ROBERT F: Yes, and I worked off and on for the Shipping Point Inspection. I worked for the county, because I used to go on Sunday to the wholesale market and inspect stuff there.

PINKERTON: Now what's the history of this property, then? Who had it before you?

ROBERT F: Well, there was two families. Japanese family name was . . .

TERESA F: . . . Uchida?

ROBERT F: Uchida. They had sold it to a family named McDougal and they only had it about a year and we bought it from them.

PINKERTON: Before the Uchida's whose was it?

ROBERT F: I have no idea. They were here a long time. They were an old-time Japanese family.

TERESA F: I think they built the house, but the house is gone now, that was here. They built the old house and so they must have lived here all the time.

ROBERT F: On the same property since the early 1900s.

PINKERTON: When you said something about your family having been across the road, I wondered if there was some connection?

TERESA F: Oh, yes. I think my mother used to tell me that the Roemers, some of the Roemers used to live off a lane that went way back there.

ROBERT F: You know where the Triple A [Automobile Association of America] building is, that's where it was.

TERESA F: Right in the back there.

ROBERT F: There was some connection to the Roemer family, I don't know what.

TERESA F: I don't know what it is.

PINKERTON: So it's basically a property that's been in the Florin history for a long time. Then for a period of time, the Uchidas had it, and now you've had it for fifty years.

ROBERT F: The McDougals I don't think had it much longer than a year.

TERESA F: They come by once in awhile, the kids . . .

ROBERT F: . . . the Japanese kids

TERESA F: They want to see the place and they take pictures. [They say] this is where the barn was, this is where the house was. Then they apologize for bothering us. They won't come in, they're afraid they're going to bother us.

PINKERTON: Out of the original forty acres, it goes down all the way to Gerber Road?

ROBERT F: No, no. We originally sold thirty-three acres. No, we sold the fourteen acres; then we sold thirty-three acres, then we sold three acres here. Now we have three left and the park is going to take an acre out here.

PINKERTON: That's the land that you just donated to the park. That was very nice of you to do that.

ROBERT F: We just thought there were those old corrals
out there and they could landscape. . . .

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

PINKERTON: Now you have this beautiful park.

ROBERT F: It'll be a 130 feet more than they will have.

PINKERTON: What are they going to call it? Fletcher Farm
Park?

ROBERT F: No, it's a part of Sunrise Florin Park. I don't
know what they'll call it.

TERESA F: They're still thinking of the name. I think it
was Florin Community History.

ROBERT F: I don't know. The building might be a different
name, but the park is Sunrise Florin Park.

TERESA F: Yes, the park is called Sunrise Florin.

ROBERT F: That was originally some of our property and
that piece that came out in the Citizen was
wrong. We didn't donate that. The subdivider,
that we sold it to, they had donated it. It was
our land originally, but that's all. We had
been paid for it by that time.

PINKERTON: Now how much do you still retain here, then?

ROBERT F: A little over two acres.

PINKERTON: Okay, so this is a nice little parcel.

ROBERT F: Started out at fifty-four and down to two. We thought the Nazarene Church was going to build there, but I guess they're not going to build there, somebody else is going to do something with it.

PINKERTON: You have certainly seen a lot of changes here in this period of time. What do you like about the changes?

ROBERT F: Nothing. [Laughter]

TERESA F: I don't like it, either.

ROBERT F: No, it's all right. It just development. It used to be nice and quiet out here. Florin Road was a nice little two-lane road and now it's just like Los Angeles traffic.

TERESA F: The way I look at it is the country is gone.
[Laughter]

PINKERTON: Well, you've got your little piece of country here. That's kind of nice.

TERESA F: Empty land on one side.

ROBERT F: I've been watching the pheasant out there. The rooster comes out everyday. We had a lot of quail here on the lawn this morning, about a dozen quail.

PINKERTON: That's nice. They probably congregate here, because they can't find any open space.

ROBERT F: We used to have a hundred out here.

PINKERTON: Really, that is wonderful.

ROBERT F: That's before the subdivision came with all the cats. Now we sometime see 30 - 35.

PINKERTON: Are there any advantages to what has happened in this area? You've got more grocery stores closer by. [Laughter]

TERESA F: Yes, that's one thing, you don't have to go so far. I can remember my folks driving to Colonial Heights, then going [to] Downtown Sacramento to some of the grocery stores to buy certain items.

ROBERT F: We used to walk down to Seven-Mile House to catch the bus into town.

TERESA F: I walked down to the Seven-Mile House and caught the Greyhound Bus to go downtown.

PINKERTON: See, I know where Seven-Mile House was, because when I came here it was still called that. But tell me, what it was like in an earlier day. I know it was a stage stop at one time.

TERESA F: Yes, it was a stage stop.

PINKERTON: It was one of those early gas stations.

ROBERT F: On this corner where Florin Mall is what I would have called an airport. On the other side there was a farm ranch, what's the name of those people over there?

TERESA F: Bauerle.

ROBERT F: Bauerles lived over there. On this corner I don't remember anything, but that corner over there was a gas station, I guess it was.

TERESA F: It was Kattles. I think their name was Kattles Stores or Station.

PINKERTON: Going from here to what is now the freeway. Like say when you were in high school, when you first came here, what did it look like?

ROBERT F: A two-lane road. Trees down as far as Stockton Boulevard, there were trees lining both sides.

TERESA F: Both sides of the road, two-lanes. Hardly a car went by. I mean you could walk, you were safe.

PINKERTON: The railroad was busier than the road.

TERESA F: Well, we walked down the railroad to go to Weideman's pool to go swimming. Hardly saw a train or anything.

PINKERTON: Right around the railroad track is where the shops were then? Was that the little business section there?

TERESA F: Yes, on this side of the track was the station, Florin Depot.

ROBERT F: Do you remember that at the Depot?

PINKERTON: I think the depot was gone by the time I came here.

TERESA F: Okay, there was the depot and the fruit berry shed, I don't know what you called it, Northern California Farms, or was it something else?

ROBERT F: There were about five or six packing sheds here in town.

TERESA F: Then on the other side of the road, there were stores, Akiyama's market.

PINKERTON: Were they mostly Japanese markets?

TERESA F: Yes, Japanese, all the way to McComber Street. Then across the street there was a big building there. What was that big building?

ROBERT F: It was some warehouse that burned down there.

TERESA F: Yes.

PINKERTON: The Redman's Hall?

TERESA F: Yes, that's on the other side of the street and then across from the Redman's Hall was a Noda Soda Fountain, I remember that. There was a blacksmith a little farther west from there,

TERESA F: Mitchell's Blacksmith shop, I think. As a kid I didn't pay [attention]. You just don't pay that much attention. I wish I paid more attention.

PINKERTON: Now, when you got farther back there, where Florin Center is now, that was, I remember reading somewhere, there were orange trees there. [They] had died during one of the floods.

ROBERT F: That's long before our time. It was open land and then they built the airport. I had a bailer, I did a lot of commercial bailing. I bailed hay where Florin Center is. In fact, getting back to your question, I could go out here at five o'clock in the morning and go all the way to Freeport Boulevard with a bailer and hardly see a car. Now I hate to even get my equipment [on the road].

PINKERTON: Now, the main roads were. . . . Elk Grove Florin Road didn't go through.

ROBERT F: This way [referring to a map].

TERESA F: Down here it just stopped.

PINKERTON: It just stopped right there. So the main road going through would have been Florin Perkins?

ROBERT F: Yes it would have.

PINKERTON: Is that right?

ROBERT F: It's the same as it is now.

TERESA F: Well it went out to Gerber [Road].

PINKERTON: And then Stockton [Boulevard]? I mean going north.

TERESA F: Yes, that was Florin Perkins going north.

PINKERTON: The east-west roads are pretty much the same, aren't they? Gerber and Florin.

TERESA F: Yes, Florin.

ROBERT F: I think all these roads are what I remember as the same. You had . . .

TERESA F: . . . except this one down here.

ROBERT F: You had Power Inn [Road], French and Florin Perkins, Elk Grove and Gardner, and Jasmin--they were all the same.

TERESA F: Of course, I don't know what they were before.

PINKERTON: When did they development start? I'm under the impression that it was in the late 1940s [or] early 1950s.

ROBERT F: It was later than that.

TERESA F: Well, Mr. Sunzieri started that subdivision, Tokay Park, where Claire lives.

PINKERTON: Is Tokay Park one of the first subdivision?

TERESA F: That one and then there was . . .

ROBERT F: . . . Kara Tract. Those two were the first ones.

TERESA F: I don't know if there was another one.

PINKERTON: Who did Tokay Park?

ROBERT F: Sunzieri and Franusich, and a guy from Elk Grove.

TERESA F: Nick . . .

PINKERTON: . . . those had been their family farms and they converted them to . . .

ROBERT F: . . . it was a vineyard, because I bought it. It was vineyard before they even built.

TERESA F: I think Nick bought that whole area.

ROBERT F: Who was at the top, I guess it be?

TERESA F: Oh, Feickert, Chris Feickert.

ROBERT F: Feickert, Nick, and Sunzieri are the ones that developed it.

PINKERTON: How about Kara Tract?

ROBERT F: I guess Jerry had something to do with it, Jerry Kara, I think.

PINKERTON: That's the impression that I've been under.

ROBERT F: I don't know who built it, but Jerry had a lot to do with it.

TERESA F: Yes, because they named all the streets after the kids.

PINKERTON: Right, so that would have been their property then? Is that what people did turn their property. . . .

TERESA F: I don't think they ever lived there. They just bought that land and then had it developed. They had a store across the street.

PINKERTON: Okay, would these be the land of people who had left them when they were evacuated, some of them?

ROBERT F: I don't think so, not in that case.

TERESA F: I don't remember that.

ROBERT F: That's not where the slaughterhouse was. Who lived there?

TERESA F: Not Kanelos.

PINKERTON: Wouldn't he be farther down, right across from Florin Center?

TERESA F: Yes, he was down there with some of that [Inaudible].

ROBERT F: This slaughterhouse was right where Vic's Market used to be, so. . . .

PINKERTON: Oh, so that's where it was.

ROBERT F: Well, between Vic's Market and the cornfield.

TERESA F: I can't remember. I remember there was a plum orchard back there somewhere.

PINKERTON: So as you think back now, what hasn't changed a lot in terms of its location? Frasinetti's comes to my mind. It's still in the same place, the same trees are there, right there by the railroad tracks. Are there other things that when you go down there you say, oh that hasn't changed that much?

ROBERT F: It's changed pretty much, because we had packing sheds. We had one at the depot, then we had one south of the depot. This is still east side of the track. There were three of them, one at the depot, then there was Pacific Fruit Exchange, and then down there was the California Fruit Exchange. Across the tracks, the first one down was American Fruit run by Carl Bruce, a neighborhood brand. Then Florin Fruit Growers, Florin Fruit Growers now is the Nedle Factory. So it has essentially changed. There's one more packing shed where all the old equipment is.

PINKERTON: Now there's some beautiful homes on Florin Road. They're kind of tucked in among the trees, but as I just drove through there this morning.

PINKERTON: I was noticing them, that some of those have been there for a long, long time. I mean it's architecture of the 1920s and the 1930s.

ROBERT F: Especially on that side, where Rita used to live.

TERESA F: Remember the old Davies place, that was all vineyard in the back, going from Florin Perkins down. That's all vineyards out there, that I know of.

ROBERT F: This country [was] almost solid vineyards from Stockton [Boulevard] to Bradshaw [Road].

PINKERTON: That's what I've heard.

TERESA F: He [Davies] had a great big swimming pool. The bottom [of the pool] was all sand. Everybody in Florin went swimming there, I think. As kids we learned to swim in the [pool]. They had a little place where the kids could learn to swim.

ROBERT F: Actually, it was a reservoir for irrigation.

PINKERTON: Oh, you could swim in it.

TERESA F: It was huge.

PINKERTON: You mentioned another one that you went to also.

TERESA F: Wiedeman's.

PINKERTON: It was for irrigation too, then?

TERESA F: That I don't know.

ROBERT F: They must have used it for that too. It wasn't nearly as big as this one.

TERESA F: No, it was a small one. It seems like everybody you talk to went swimming there.

ROBERT F: In fact, I can remember from Davis coming over to go to that swimming pool with somebody from Sacramento.

PINKERTON: Really.

TERESA F: But it wasn't very big.

ROBERT F: I never did see this when it was big though.

TERESA F: Yes, this one was big. It was a great big pool.

ROBERT F: A hundred feet or so.

PINKERTON: Almost Olympic size.

ROBERT F: Well.

TERESA F: He charged to go swimming, but he let us kids go in for free. He was a nice man. We were little, you know.

ROBERT F: That's right down Florin Perkins.

PINKERTON: Whatever happen to the Davies family, because they were gone by the time I came around here. Yet, I always hear people talking about them.

ROBERT F: I don't know.

TERESA F: I just remember the name. On this side of Florin Road there were a lot of homes. Let's see, there's Chet's Barbershop, where Mickey used to live there were some homes there. And the section gang, they called the section gang the ones who worked on the railroad. That was near the railroad tracks.

PINKERTON: Now, when you went to high school, how did you get there?

TERESA F: We went on the bus. We had bus transportation.

PINKERTON: Is that when Mr. Butler drove the bus.

TERESA F: No, not Mr. Butler. I never had Mr. Butler as a bus driver. We always walked to grammar school. I don't think he drove for the high school.

PINKERTON: Maybe he just drove for the elementary school.

TERESA F: He drove for the elementary school, but we didn't ride the bus, because we walked. When I started Elk Grove High we had bus transportation.

PINKERTON: Who drove your bus, do you remember?

TERESA F: Yes, Mr. Rolfe. I forgot his first name.

PINKERTON: Because on some of those routes they had students driving them.

TERESA F: No, the students weren't driving when I went.

PINKERTON: What about during the war, what were the effects of those war years on Florin, in addition to the Japanese people leaving? Folks went into the military?

TERESA F: Yes, a lot of the kids from high school were going in the military.

PINKERTON: That would be your class.

TERESA F: Right. My brother went. Most of the kids went into the service of some kind, navy, army.

ROBERT F: You asked that question of what happen to Florin as far as I'm concerned it almost died. You take 2500 people out of a little area. . . .

TERESA F: It was quiet.

PINKERTON: So most of the farms just stayed vacant and unused?

ROBERT F: Well, Florin Fruit Growers ran a few of them. Several of them, like we did, that took over.

PINKERTON: But there just weren't enough people [for] labor.

ROBERT F: A lot of them just were abandoned like, really.

TERESA F: And when I got out of high school, I worked in the grocery store and he took over at Kato's Market, where he had a soda fountain and I worked in there part-time.

PINKERTON: So the combination of these 2500 people leaving plus all the young men going into the military and probably a few women too, it just really is a massive shift of people, isn't it?

TERESA F: It was quiet. You would hardly see a car, while there weren't too many cars then anyway. You hardly saw any traffic.

ROBERT F: Even after we lived here it still wasn't very busy.

PINKERTON: You know you hear lots of stories that there were people who were concerned that there were Japanese people who were working under Japan and that they were spies. Did you ever hear any of those kinds of stories?

TERESA F: Yes, I did.

PINKERTON: What kind of things did you hear?

TERESA F: Well, I [did] see some FBI, they said they were FBI, people going to Tanigawa's Store. That's the store that Nick took over. [The FBI] go in

TERESA F: there and they took Mr. Tanigawa and a bunch of others. We didn't know . . .

PINKERTON: . . . it would have been right away then?

TERESA F: Yes, right away.

ROBERT F: Before they moved.

TERESA F: That's why as kids we didn't know, that's all we knew. Actually we never heard anything else. Why they were doing it? Or whether they were spies or what.

PINKERTON: But that was the impression . . .

TERESA F: . . . that people got. I don't remember any other incident.

PINKERTON: Did you ever hear anything to that effect?

ROBERT F: No.

PINKERTON: You were too busy. [Laughter]

TERESA F: He probably was at the vineyard.

ROBERT F: Before they [Japanese] left I was inspecting out here and they had a curfew. They had to be, I don't know what time it was, eight o'clock or something.

TERESA F: Eight I think, I'm not sure.

ROBERT F: I used to haul some strawberries into town for them after I got through work, because they couldn't go.

PINKERTON: That was just before they were evacuated then?

ROBERT F: Yes, because it was right at the height of the strawberry season. It was just the peak of the season when they left. Which was real disgusting.

PINKERTON: Well, the timing certainly wasn't very good and people just didn't have much warning that that's what had to happen.

ROBERT F: The strawberries quit because they didn't have any pickers. A few people came out and picked.

PINKERTON: What basically happened?

ROBERT F: Strawberries just rotted on the vine, that's all. Not all of them, but the biggest part of them.

PINKERTON: What would you estimate the acreage of strawberries to have been?

ROBERT F: I have no idea. I can tell you how it used to be six or seven car loads that went out of here every night and there's 2200 crates in a car. It was a real fast deal.

TERESA F: There were a lot of grape vines, too.

PINKERTON: Basically what I heard is, everything from Stockton Road out as far as Mather Air Force Base. Would that seem to fit your understanding?

ROBERT F: Yes, all that area and probably half way to Elk Grove, maybe Calvine [Road].

PINKERTON: And how far north?

ROBERT F: Well, to Jackson Road.

PINKERTON: To Jackson Road. That's a lot of strawberries.

ROBERT F: I'm not talking about strawberries right now. These farmers had maybe thirty acres, they only have maybe two or three acres of strawberries, the rest would be grapes.

PINKERTON: Okay, a combination of the grapes and the strawberries.

TERESA F: Yes.

ROBERT F: In a lot of places they plant the strawberries between the grapes and then the grapes and then the grapes start again.

PINKERTON: Now coming from your agricultural background, were these particular kinds of grapes that did well in this soil?

ROBERT F: Here, yes.

PINKERTON: The Tokays.

ROBERT F: The Tokays.

PINKERTON: Were they primarily Tokays?

ROBERT F: Almost exclusively.

PINKERTON: And that's a table grape.

TERESA F: Tokay Flame was the name of them.

ROBERT F: The only difference is that Lodi pretty much was the home of the Tokays. Lodi's soil is deep and they could get about three or four times as much production as we did here, because we have shallow soil. But one big advantage at Florin, we could get them a few days earlier than Lodi and that's where they made it.

PINKERTON: They got the jump on the market.

ROBERT R: We probably could ship a week earlier than Lodi.

PINKERTON: Now were there strawberries anywhere else around or was this the main strawberry region?

ROBERT F: As far as I know it was just in this area. As you do notice, it is starting to come back.

PINKERTON: Yes.

TERESA F: Didn't they go a little bit to Elk Grove, too.

ROBERT F: Well, there's a few. And then there's a strawberry [ranch] over on Rio Linda there's a few, but that's called a Regal. They didn't have too many.

PINKERTON: I've heard that during the war, UC Davis developed a berry that did well in the Salinas area.

ROBERT F: Well, we only really had one berry here. We had two kinds, that's all. What they called an Oregon Plum was a real sweet one, the best one. But they could only ship over night, [then] they would be black. That's why they were never shipped further than Seattle and Salt Lake. Then they had the Twentieth Century. Those were the two varieties that we had much to do with in those days.

PINKERTON: So from an agriculturist's viewpoint, they would be looking for something that had a better shelf life.

ROBERT F: Well, I think you've heard it said that Florin was the strawberry capital of the world in those days. They shipped a lot of berries out of here.

PINKERTON: And you agree with that, that it really was the strawberry capital?

ROBERT F: At that time.

PINKERTON: And that after the war, it just never came back to its prominence.

ROBERT F: Young kids didn't like to work like the old folks.

PINKERTON: Well, and the whole family had to work too.

TERESA F: Oh, yes.

PINKERTON: So that makes a difference.

TERESA F: That's had work.

PINKERTON: That's intensive work. There's other things that young people want to do. [Laughter]

PINKERTON: But basically, that any families that were involved here with grapes, particularly, the kids had to work, didn't they?

TERESA F: Oh, yes. We all worked. I'd come home from school and the first thing I have to go tie grape vines. I can remember all of us went out. Then we had to pull mustard between the grape vines. My dad wanted all the mustard out. So

TERESA F: after school we go out there and pull these mustard vines out. They were huge. On the way back, they had the dirt, I don't know what you call the . . .

ROBERT F: . . . berms.

TERESA F: No, paths. What did they call them?

ROBERT F: Oh, yes. Avenues.

TERESA F: Avenues they'd call them. And he would set a couple of dimes for all of us, we'd find a dime as we weeded.

PINKERTON: Ah, a little incentive.

TERESA F: Yes.

PINKERTON: I've never heard that term "avenues" before.

ROBERT F: The reason for that is they would drive the truck through to load the grapes. In other words, if you had all crates you have to carry them blocks. Every 100 or 200 feet, or so, they have a row with no lines, was all it was.

PINKERTON: So that's where you could get through then.

ROBERT F: The truck would get through to pick up the grapes.

TERESA F: Then we would go to the store and buy a bottle of Pepsi. That was a treat for us. Pepsi and maybe it was potato chips, or something. That was a lot of money [back then].

TERESA F: Before that pennies were big. We would go buy Tootsie Rolls for a penny, because they were big. We'd share them.

PINKERTON: So as you look back at your fifty years here, when were the best times?

TERESA F: The best times. They were pretty hard times.

ROBERT F: All of them probably.

TERESA F: We didn't have much, but we sure had a good time. We didn't have bicycles or cars, but we managed. We had a good time, though. I think one thing, we didn't get into trouble, because we were home most of the time.

PINKERTON: And working.

TERESA F: Yes. The parents knew where we were all the time. We never talked back to our parents. No way. We were just brought up to just do what they said for us to do. If they said come home at five o'clock, we're going to eat at five

TERESA F: o'clock. Sure enough we'd leave the baseball game, we were at playing, and be home on time for dinner. It was called supper then.

PINKERTON: The expectations were very clear in that sense [of] what you did.

TERESA F: Oh yes. That's the way it was.

ROBERT F: We didn't know any different. That's the only to put it.

TERESA F: Well, we just did that.

PINKERTON: Now, I'm sure you're aware that the Japanese Americans of this area hold you both in very high respect. What did you do different than a lot of other people didn't do?

ROBERT F: I don't think I did anything. I knew a lot of them before, you knew from growing the grapes and the strawberries. Because I worked here at least three or four years during both the strawberry and grape seasons. Grapes was the state and the strawberry were Sacramento County. I don't know.

TERESA F: I always liked them. I never had anything against them, because they were so friendly. They'd give you anything. There was one Japanese family that lived across the street

TERESA F: from where we lived, they'd bring you all these vegetables. They were always giving you something, you know. They were kind. We never had any problems with them.

ROBERT F: I [didn't] have too good a reputation when I turned their grapes down.

TERESA F: They tease him now.

PINKERTON: But that's what you had to do.

ROBERT F: Well yes. Never had any real problems. Some mutterings out, inspector this and inspector that.

TERESA F: They talk to him once and a while, he used to say go get the boxes that were underneath and they were laughing that they put them under there. Because some were a little green. They tell stories on him.

PINKERTON: Well, I know the Tsukamoto's have a great deal of respect for the both of you. They felt that you certainly treated them fair and square.

ROBERT F: Vice versa. I don't know anybody I like any better than Mary. Of course, I knew Al before [Mary]. I didn't know Mary too good before that, but I know Al for four years before that.

TERESA F: I didn't know Mary at all, but I had seen Al. He would come over. We lived right across from the shed of the Florin Fruit Growers, in the corner, McNie and Reese Road. That corner was vineyard there. That's how I see Al, but I had never met Mary until she came back. In 1940s, whenever it was.

ROBERT F: 1945.

TERESA F: I always liked her. I can remember it was Bob's birthday in July, and she said we're not going to tell him, we're going to make a cake. So we surprised him with a birthday cake.

ROBERT F: That must have been in 1946.

TERESA F: That's the following year, I think. Well, we were still there, we were living there.

ROBERT F: Oh, yes.

TERESA F: Yes, I can't remember.

ROBERT F: So they must have come back before all this mess.

TERESA F: That's what I think. They came back after we were married. I don't. It just slips my mind. She surprised him. She fixed a Chinese dinner.

PINKERTON: Oh, okay.

TERESA F: She fixed her chow mein and stuff. I can remember that and I helped her.

ROBERT F: I've always had a lot of Japanese friends. In fact, we have property rented to a Japanese family that's my dad paid for. It's been over twenty years since my dad passed away and we were renting it then and still renting twenty acres now.

PINKERTON: But you're very highly respected by everybody. The Florin community and everybody that has known you both.

TERESA F: I don't know anybody that doesn't like us, but there probably are, you know. I don't know.

PINKERTON: People always speak to people [about you] with just a great deal of respect.

TERESA F: Well, that's good.

ROBERT F: We spent fifty years.

PINKERTON: You're people of your word. You have respect and integrity.

ROBERT F: I hope so.

TERESA F: We never had anything against the Japanese. I just felt like they were like everybody else. You go to school with them. You talk to them. They had movies that they showed at the

TERESA F: Japanese Hall. It's where the Buddhist Church is, on Pritchard Road, at the corner. We would kind of sneak in and stay in the back, because we didn't know what they [the movies] were about. They would say well come on, you can come over and watch. We kind of stayed in the background. There was one Japanese, he would tell us what was happening.

PINKERTON: Because it was in Japanese.

TERESA F: Yes, it was in Japanese. He would tell us this is this and that's that. His mother was a midwife and she lived on Reese Road. We used to call him Champ. I don't know his name.

PINKERTON: He didn't come back.

TERESA F: No. They say he lives in LA [Los Angeles]. I'm not sure. I'd sure like to talk to him.

ROBERT F: A lot of them didn't come back.

PINKERTON: What percentage would you say came back?

ROBERT F: I really have no idea.

TERESA F: I don't think too many. Their homes were all gone and ran down. It was sad to see all the dogs. We tied grape vines, and all the dogs were running hungry.

PINKERTON: Because they couldn't take them with them.

TERESA F: That was sad. Oh, that was sad.

ROBERT F: A couple days before they left, they were told they could bring their dogs in. They brought them into the depot there, where the packing ship was, and tied them up, then the SPCA [Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals] came and picked them up. That was really a sad deal.

PINKERTON: So they just took all the dogs?

ROBERT F: Not all of them.

PINKERTON: But the ones that had been tied.

TERESA F: Yes, a lot of them were running around hungry. We'd feed them. We'd take our lunch, we'd be working on the ranch, we'd feed them what we had. They were frightened.

ROBERT F: I took care of one for a Japanese for several years.

TERESA F: And the people ransacked all the houses. I remember that.

PINKERTON: Well, when you leave property unattended. . . .

TERESA F: Yes, I don't remember doing anything like that, but they said we went in and got this and got that. Whatever things they could find that they could use.

ROBERT F: I can't imagine. When they left [Mary] swept the floor.

TERESA F: Cleaned it all out.

PINKERTON: Yes, her description of leaving really gets to you.

TERESA F: Yes, I imagine.

PINKERTON: So after they left you moved into their house.

ROBERT F: No, it was about a year or so later.

PINKERTON: So it was empty for awhile.

ROBERT F: Yes, I think one time I had a fellow who pruned stay there a couple of months. We rented it out at various times to people working there. It was just a couple months, it wasn't the whole time they were gone.

PINKERTON: Well, this is the thing that people are very grateful for, is that the ones who did come back and their things had been taken care of. Whatever they had left, wherever it was stored, it was still there, whether in a barn or in a garage.

ROBERT F: Well, I always felt good about that. Although, I did have some stuff that was for one family. I had some stuff stored and someone got away with some toasters and nice waffle irons and stuff like that. Somehow during the time that I had it in my possession somebody got into it.

TERESA F: Now my folks had a refrigerator, [Inaudible]. Do you know Moon? Anyway, he wanted to know if my folks would keep it until he came back. When he came back we gave it to him. It was a refrigerator, but on the outside it looked like it was aluminum, I don't know. What do you call that?

ROBERT F: Silver?

TERESA F: Yea, it was a big refrigerator and we gave it back to them.

ROBERT F: I was really glad that most of the stuff was there. The ranch was still there and taken care of.

PINKERTON: That's what counts.

TERESA F: I think one reason they were always nice to my folks, the Japanese were.

PINKERTON: You give that back.

TERESA F: They always gave us things. They would share.
Whatever they had, they would share.

PINKERTON: Well, I think you both can feel real good about
your contributions, not only to the past but to
the future. I think that when you look at what
you've done with this property, there's going
to be something here that's going to stay
forever.

TERESA F: I hope so.

[End Tape 1, Side B]